TCAP-Alt: Alternate Performance Indicators and Revised Scoring Rubrics

The Background: The requirement for alternate assessment was first mandated through the reauthorization of IDEA '97. All students, including those with significant cognitive and adaptive disabilities have been included in Tennessee's assessment program since 2000-2001. Students participating in alternate assessment were given two options for assessment: Portfolio Assessment and the ASA. ASA originally stood for Academic Skills Assessment. The acronym was then changed to reflect the title of Alternate Standards Assessment. In both cases, the ASA was an out-of-level Terra Nova assessment (grade levels K-2) or TCAP Achievement Test (grade level 3). Alternate assessment was initially focused on the functional skills on which students were working. Through the years, the focus has turned more toward assessment of academic skills. This was reinforced by the passage of No Child Left Behind and further clarified through USDOE guidance received in August 2005 regarding the December 2003 Final Rules and Regulations for Assessing Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities.

In April 2005, the TCAP Alternate Standards Committee met for the first time to discuss the development of alternate performance indicators on which TCAP-Alt assessments would be based. Concurrently, the TCAP-Alt Advisory Committee met to discuss the need for changes to the focus of the TCAP-Alt Rubric to place more of an emphasis on student academic achievement, rather than programming opportunities available to the student. Discussion of changes to the rubric to meet the needs of students in nontraditional educational settings (e.g. homebound) was also discussed. The guidance from the USDOE received in August 2005 further prompted the completion of each of these items.

In compliance with the guidance from NCLB, the Alternate Performance Indicators (API's) were developed to link directly to content by grade level. The complexity and skill level associated with the APIs varies significantly from that of the general curriculum, however. API's were developed by a group of approximately 50 educators. These included the following:

- SDOE staff from the Divisions of Special Education and Teaching and Learning, and the Office of Assessment, Evaluation and Research;
- special education teachers and administrators from across the state;
- representatives from the TCAP-Alt Advisory Committee and from state special schools;
- LRE for LIFE staff; and
- Post-secondary education professionals.

The focus on portfolio assessment is critical because the August 2005 guidance clearly indicates that the use of out-of-level assessments as they have been used within TCAP

is not acceptable for inclusion in proficiency or participation rates for the purpose of AYP calculations.

The Recommendation:

The Department of Education requests adoption of the TCAP Alternate Performance Indicators and the revised series of TCAP-Alt Rubrics as submitted on final reading. The SBE staff concurs with the recommendation.

Assessment of Students With the Most Significant Cognitive and Adaptive Disabilities Through Use of the TCAP-Alt Portfolio:

Students who participate in the TCAP-Alternate Portfolio Assessment (approximately 1% of the total school population being assessed through the regular TCAP assessments) have cognitive and adaptive disabilities significant to the extent that participation in the regular assessment, even with accommodations and modifications would not measure the progress the student is making towards proficiency in his/her program. The TCAP-Alt Portfolio Assessment has been aligned to the Tennessee's curriculum standards through Alternate Performance Indicators that link the wide range of these students into grade level clusters. Since learning for students with significant cognitive disabilities is at a much slower rate than for typically-functioning peers, the portfolio measures progress of the students throughout the school year, rather than in the manner utilized for the TCAP assessments.

The following is a scenario using a fictional student of how this assessment and the process used to document it occur. The student, John Doe, is a 9th grade student enrolled in a Tennessee Public school. An educational evaluation was provided by the school system. The results yielded an intelligence quotient (cognitive assessment) of 45 (a score of 100 on the evaluation would be average). Adaptive behavior scores are consistent with the IQ. The School Psychologist has stated the student has a significant cognitive and adaptive disability.

The IEP team must determine the most appropriate assessment in which the student can participate. The team determines that the student meets the TCAP-Alt Participation Guidelines, for participating in a TCAP-Alt assessment. The IEP team agrees that a TCAP-Alt assessment is more appropriate for the student than taking the general assessment even with extensive accommodations. The IEP team must now determine which TCAP-Alt assessment is most appropriate for the student, the TCAP-Alt Portfolio Assessment or the TCAP-Alt Out-of-Level Assessment. After reviewing the student's IEP goals, it is determined that the best assessment for this student is the TCAP-Alt Portfolio Assessment.

Since John is a 9th grade student, he must be assessed in math. John's teacher, Mrs. Smith, reviews John's IEP goals and identifies 3 content standards under the content area of math in which to assess John. Mrs. Smith chooses:

1) numbers and operations
2) algebra and
3) geometry

She must choose one Alternate Performance Indicator (API) to assess under each of these content standards. Mrs. Smith uses the *TCAP-Alt Teacher's*

Manual to find John's grade level cluster, 9-12, and looks under each content standard she has chosen. She chooses the following API's:

NO1. Count how many objects are in a set (1-100) from Numbers and Operations, **A2.** Sort objects by up to four attributes (color, size, shape) from Algebra, and **GM1.** Identify and/or name given shapes (circles, squares, triangles, and rectangles) from geometry.

Mrs. Smith instructs John using the same instructional methods she typically uses. During the instruction, she must document 20 different occasions throughout the year, where she collects data on each of the three APIs chosen. She will graph John's progress on three separate graphs (one for each API). These graphs should show progress across the year. For example, initially John could only count the number of items in a set of 3 with Mrs. Smith moving his hand to touch each item and counting aloud with him. As the year progressed, John was able to touch the items without assistance and only needed Mrs. Smith to count aloud with him. Later, John could both touch and count the items without assistance. Mrs. Smith increased the difficulty level of this skill by adding two more items to the set. John continued to practice this skill many times throughout the school year with Mrs. Smith documenting his progress. In addition, Mrs. Smith made sure that John had opportunities to practice these skills in inclusive settings and to interact with his non-disabled peers. For example, one day John passed out 4 markers to each group working on a group math project in the general education classroom.

Mrs. Smith gave John choices related to the skills on which he was working. Sometimes John was able to choose whether to work on counting at the computer, in the general education classroom, or with a partner in the special education classroom. Mrs. Smith compiled the data she had gathered on John's progress throughout the year and submitted her portfolio for scoring. Mrs. Smith was certain that she had provided John with appropriate opportunities and documented his progress. She was confident that John would receive a score of proficient on his Portfolio Assessment.